

NERA Business Meeting Minutes

September 22, 2020

In attendance: Mark Hutton (Maine), Kumar Venkitanarayanan (CT-Storrs), Jason White (CT-New Haven), Puneet Srivastava (Maryland), Mario Teisl (Maine), Wendie Cohick (New Jersey), Anton Bekkerman (New Hampshire), Eric Wommack (Delaware), Darrell Donahue (West Virginia), Margaret Smith (New York), Jan Nyrop (New York), Deborah Sheely (Rhode Island), Jody Jellison (Massachusetts), Matt Wilson (West Virginia – Chair), Rick Rhodes (NERA Executive Director), David Leibovitz (NERA Coordinator)

1.) Call to Order and Introductions

- Matt Wilson (Chair) called the meeting to order and all attendees went through a series of introductions.
- **The agenda was approved by acclamation.**
- **The minutes from the 6/10/2020 NERA Business Meeting were approved by acclamation.**

2.) Executive Director / Coordinator Evaluation (Matt Wilson)

- Rick made a statement to summarize the annual report of accomplishments of the Office of the Executive Director and the value of NERA.
- David and Rick were dismissed from the meeting and the Directors conducted their evaluation, led by Matt Wilson.

3.) NERA Business

- MAC update – Matt Wilson, WVU (MAC members: Matt Wilson, Jan Nyrop, Eric Wommack, Puneet Srivastava, Pat Vittum-NEED, Amy Ouellette-NEED)
 - Five NE multistate projects/coordinating committees/extension and research activities were set to expire on 9/30/2020; three renewed for a five-year term beginning in 2020.
 - NE1501 Harnessing Chemical Ecology to Address Agricultural Pest and Pollinator Priorities (*renewed as NE2001*)
 - NE1544 Dairy Production systems: C,N, and P management for production, profitability and the environment. (terminated)
 - NE1545 Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems: Assessing the Impact of Climate Variability and Climate Change (*renewed as NE2045*)
 - NECC1501 Sustainable Farm Energy Production and Use (*renewed as NECC2001*)
 - NEERA1501 University-Community Intermediaries: Supporting Informed Decision-Making Around Polarized Issues (terminated)
 - Five NE multistate activities are set to expire on 9/30/2021. NERA is working with the editors and Administrative Advisers of those groups to help prepare renewals, if desired. Requests to write for these projects are anticipated to arrive in the fall.
 - NE1601 Eastern White Pine Health and Responses to Environmental Changes

- NE1602 Explorations in the Turfgrass Phytobiome: Understanding Microbial Associations and Developing Tools for Management
- NE1640 Plant-Parasitic Nematode Management as a Component of Sustainable Soil Health Programs in Horticultural and Field Crop Production Systems
- NEERA1603 Northeast Pasture Consortium
- NEERA1604 Northeast Region Technical Committee on Integrated Pest Management
- One project has nominated a new Administrative Adviser to be approved by NERA today:
 - NE1710 Improving Forage and Bioenergy Crops: Current AA Don Viands (Cornell) has nominated Eric Bishop-von Wettberg (UVM), as the new AA.
 - **A motion was introduced to approve Dr. Bishop-von Wettberg as the AA for NE1710. The motion was approved unanimously.**
- As an informational item, several projects are seeking new Administrative Advisers. AA's do not need to be disciplinary experts in the project's focus area. NERA Directors are invited to serve as or nominate AA's for the following:
 - NECC2001 Sustainable Farm Energy Production and Use (formerly Gary Thompson)
 - NE1701 Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals (formerly Gary Thompson)
 - NRSP3 The National Atmospheric Deposition Program (NADP) (Northeast AA formerly Jon Wraith)
- National Research Support Project Review Committee (NRSP RC) update
 - Matt Wilson serves as NERA's representative on the NRSP RC.
 - The NRSP RC is proposing a number of changes to the NRSP guidelines. The guidelines are shorter and include clear language about the "sunsetting" of projects – either the end of NRSPs or new business models for NRSP efforts that rely less and less on NRSP funds. One change is the establishment of two formal classifications of NRSPs:
 - Capacity/core NRSPs (e.g. NRSP1 – NIMSS and MRF Impacts, NRSP3 – National Atmospheric Deposition Program)
 - Emerging Innovation NRSPs (other NRSPs, e.g. NRSP4)
 - The NRSP RC intends to keep continued pressure on these projects to draft new business plans and reduce support from NRSP funds.
 - The NRSP RC is making the following recommendations on the renewals of NRSP4, NRSP6, and NRSP9:
 - NRSP4 recommendation: Support the NRSP4 renewal request as written at the proposed funding level of \$481,182 per year for FFY2021 through FFY2025, while also including in the proposal a clear distinction of NRSP4 from IR-4 and a collaborative discussion for a future model to transition off NRSP funds, with progress on this effort to be reported back to the NRSP-RC no later than midterm review time.

- NRSP6 recommendation: Reject NRSP6's renewal proposal as submitted. This will result in one additional and final year of funding at \$135,000.
 - NRSP9 recommendation: Support the renewal request of NRSP9 as written at the proposed funding level (\$199,000 for FFYs 2021, 2022, and 2025; \$219,000 for FFY2023, and \$249,000 for FFY2024) with the request to start a collaborative discussion for a future model that transitions off of NRSP funds, with progress to be reported back to the NRSP-RC no later than midterm review time. NRSP9 must also submit a more complete and comprehensive impact analysis than the previous version by midterm review time.
 - **All Experiment Station directors will cast an electronic ballot developed by the NRSP RC to approve changes to the NRSP guidelines as well as recommendations on renewals of NRSP4, NRSP6, and NRSP9. That ballot will be distributed after today's meeting and will close during the ESS Business Meeting on October 1, 2020.**
- ESS (Experiment Station Section) business meeting preview
 - The meeting website, with registration (required) and agenda details is live: <http://escop.info/ess-2020>.
 - The ESS business meeting will be held on October 1, 2020 from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm EDT.
 - All NERA Directors are encouraged to attend and engage in the ESS business meeting. Every Director has a seat at the table, and a voice in the section.
 - The NRSP RC will make its presentation as mentioned previously. A discussion will follow and the voting will close immediately after that discussion.
 - The Communications and Marketing Committee will present its APLU-BAA (Board on Agricultural Assembly) strategic plan at the ESS business meeting, seeking a \$100k commitment annually from each of the three participation sections (Experiment Station Section – ESS, Cooperative Extension Section – CES, and Administrative Heads Section – AHS) for two-years. This commitment will hire 1.5 FTEs to be housed at APLU; dedicated employees focused on the new communications and marketing project.
 - An annual ESS budget will be presented for approval by the section.
- End of year NERA budget review
 - For information only, NERA presented an FY20 close and FY21 projected budget.
 - NERA has retained its full commitment to support Planning Grants and reduced its commitment to travel and operating costs.
 - NERA Planning Grants are intended to assist principal investigators and collaborators with submitting larger grant proposals. The current RFP is posted on the NERA website: (https://4735ccc5-85de-42b4-96cb-0b13c7f9c210.filesusr.com/ugd/895599_c65be38a1fdd488f81ec57ed108d411c.pdf)
- 2021 Face-to-face meetings: decision points

- In 2019, NERA selected Philadelphia as a best-fit meeting site for all Directors to access by air.
- The Chair recommends that NERA begin to plan a 2021 face-to-face meeting, with the expectation that it could be cancelled if needed. Cancellation should be discussed up front with the hotel when making arrangements.
- A dual-track will need to be provided so that the meeting can accommodate a hybrid of face-to-face and virtual participation.
- Many Directors are currently unable to travel and could be unable to travel come March 2020.
- WVU employees are currently able to travel, but not using state dollars. At WVU, travel to NERA meetings is funded by designated grant dollars and travel would be possible at this time.
- Maryland out-of-state travel is restricted by the Governor indefinitely. A hybrid option would be important.
- NERA OED will explore options for a 2021 hybrid meeting, anchored by a face-to-face presence in Philadelphia.
- NEED/NERA Joint Meeting, Portland, ME, June 2021
 - Maine currently has a prohibition on meetings with more than 50 attendees.
 - Anyone coming from CT, NJ, NY, VT would need to quarantine for two weeks or present a negative COVID-19 test before attending a meeting in Maine
- COVID-19 challenges: what are you doing?
 - At WVU, student behavior drove the university to conduct classes fully online for two weeks. A decision on returning to some in-person instruction will be released this week. WVU is effectively open for research with social distancing and coordination for entering facilities.
 - UMass will have difficulty meeting 1:1 match in the upcoming year due to a freeze on spending state funds, e.g. a freeze on hiring with state funds.
 - Delaware is facing significant state cuts; fee for service activities have not been ongoing at normal levels. Soil and water analysis labs have revised their fee schedules. Revenue generation to support research infrastructure is a critical issue.
 - **Rick suggested holding another Zoom conversation for open discussion about state issues that have arisen during the Fall semester amid COVID-19.**
- NERA December 2020 quarterly Teleconference to be held **Tuesday, December 15, 2020, 8:30 am – 10:30 am ET.**

4.) Resolutions

- Matt Wilson read a resolution to all NERA Directors who departed their positions in 2020:
 - Fred Servello, Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station, University of Maine
 - Adel Shirmohammadi, Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Maryland

- Jon Wraith, New Hampshire Agricultural Experiment Station, University of New Hampshire
- Gary Thompson, Pennsylvania Agricultural Experiment Station, Penn State University
- Brad Hillman, New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, Rutgers University
- Ted Andreadis, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station – New Haven
- Carol Thornber, Rhode Island Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Rhode Island
- Ken Blemings, West Virginia Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, West Virginia University
- Sabine O’Hara, The University of the District of Columbia
- Thomas Vogelmann, Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Vermont

The meeting adjourned at 10:34 am EDT.